

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1932 9th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Greater U Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2011	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	09-393	X New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

The applicant, architect Greg Kearley of Inscape Studio representing owner Paul So, seeks on-going conceptual design review for an apartment and retail building proposed on a vacant site in the U Street Historic District. When last presented in October, the Board expressed concern about height and imposing quality of the design in relation to its surroundings. Several specific suggestions were made for improving the compatibility of the design and, at the suggestion of the Board, members Casarella and Taylor have met with the applicant and staff to explore alternative design options.

Revised Proposal

Compositionally, the intent of the proposed changes has been to strengthen the three-story portion of the building, to make it read as the dominant element of the design, and to reduce the visual impact of the entrance-balcony bay and fourth floor, so that it visually recedes. To strengthen the three-story component, the fenestration has been broken down into smaller punched openings with a stronger vertical orientation, and the cladding changed to a terra cotta tile that would relate to the red brick common in the historic district. In order to lower the height of the three story element, the height of the parapet wall has been lowered by 18” with a low glass railing provided for the fourth floor balcony. To reduce the visual impact of the other elements, the framework around the balconies has been slightly recessed from the building line, and the roof of the third floor balcony eliminated. The fourth floor has been lowered by 30 inches in height, the heavy sun screen on the fourth floor has been eliminated, and the top floor has been made lighter in color.

Evaluation

The revised composition improves the compatibility of the new construction with the surrounding low-scale historic row. In emphasizing the three-story portion of the building – and by slight modifications to its height and fenestration – this portion now reads as the primary element of the composition. The height of this three-story element is within the established range of heights within this block, and will relate more directly and compatibly with its immediate context. The fourth story element is quieter and more recessive, designed clearly to be a background element in the streetscape. An added benefit of the redesign is that the three story element will more directly relate to the three story building at the rear of the site, providing greater architectural consistency and unity to the project overall.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the revised conceptual design as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and delegate final approval to staff.